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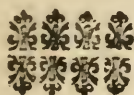
ON

A Late PAPER,

ENTITLED,

A LETTER to a DISSENTER
upon occasion of his Majesties late
Gracious DECLARATION
of INDULGENCE.

By H. C.



L O N D O N,

Printed for *John Harris*, at the *Harrow* against the
Church in the *Poultry*, MDCLXXXVII.

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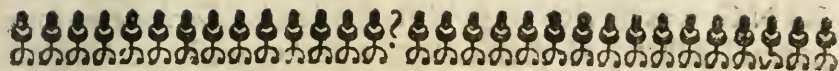
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ANIMADVERSIONS ON a late PAPER,
entituled, *A Letter to a Dissenter, &c.*

WHAT Severities towards the *Persons*, what Havock and Devastations on the *Goods and Estates* of peaceable English Men, have some years past been practised by *strained* Interpretations, and a rigorous Execution of the several *Penal Laws*, is sure too late to be forgot by the *Sufferers*, too notorious to be denied by the *Actors*.

During this *Storm* the Dissenters of all sorts filled Earth and Heaven with loud and mournful Complaints, both of the Iniquity of *those Laws*, and the *Persecution* they thereby suffered; which was become so intolerable, that many actually transported themselves to foreign Parts; *Multitudes more*, out of a sense of their present hard usage, or just apprehension of further Prosecutions, were upon the wing ready to fly at the first opportunity to the remotest Desarts, chusing by a voluntary Banishment from their *Native Country* to expose themselves to all Hazards abroad, rather than continue under those Evils which they either felt or feared at home. And as *Oppression* is apt to make even wise Men mad; not a few distracted with these frightful Ideas, suffered themselves to be embarqu'd in Designs no less unwarrantable in their own Nature, than destructive in the Event.

In the height of this *Consternation*, and when no Interest but that of his Majties own Princely Generosity and the Publick-Weal, could necessitate him to it (the *Western Rebellion*

bellion being crush't and all his Enemies at his feet) the **KING** was pleas'd to publish his *healing Declaration* for a general **Liberty of Conscience**, together with the Grounds and Reasons inducing him thereunto ; it being no sudden or *occasional* Overture to serve a present turn, but the well-weigh'd and long-confirmed Result of his *Royal Judgment*, which as he had *many years ago* declared on sundry occasions, so 'tis not unknown to *whom* we owe the *Retarding* thereof so long, and consequently all the *Disasters* attending that unhappy Obstruction.

By this *Gracious Declaration*, as his Majesty did freely and fully ease all his *Nonconforming Subjects* from those Pressures under which they had groaned for so many years, and put them into an equal Capacity with the rest of their Fellow-Subjects; to serve his Majesty and their Countrey, without violating their *Consciences*, (a natural *Birth-right-Priviledg*, which they were before debarr'd of) so he particularly expressed his Kindness to *that Party* who call themselves, **The Church of England**, by his Royal Assurance, that they should without any molestation, fully enjoy all *their Possessions*, as well as the *free Exercise* of their Religion.

Now who that considers Men as acting like *rational Creatures*, could have imagined but such a very gracious Procedure, would have obliged all his Majesty's Subjects to a most *joyful Resentment* of so vast a Favour ?

Who would not have thought that the *Church-men* (who seem'd to value themselves upon nothing more than their *steady Loyalty*, and intire *passive Obedience*) should have been extreamly pleas'd, that their Prince, though himself of a different Communion, was so far from putting them on the Practice of that *uneasy Vertue*, as on the contrary he vouchsafed so peculiar a regard of them, as to continue them in the Figure of the *National Church*, and sure Enjoyment of

all their former *Advantages*, except that *unaccountable* one of forcing all others; (altho by destructive means, and dangerous to the Publick Repose) to conform to their particular *Schemes*, which yet themselves own to be *indifferent*.

At worst, if they could be supposed capable of such an unreasonable *Peevishness*, as not to be satisfied, because their Nails were pared, and they could not scratch their Neighbours so as heretofore; yet it could not be doubted but all the *Dissenters* of whatever Denomination, would with the *highest Gratitude* receive such an indearing Indulgence; the rather because *His Majesty* not only assured them of it for his *own Reign*, but engaged to do his part for continuing it to their *Posterity*.

But as what is offered with the *Right Hand* is not seldom received with the *Left*; and the best Actions frequently happen to be traduced by the Sinister Interpretations of those that postpone the *Publique Tranquillity* to their own pettish Humours, little *Self-Interests*, or perhaps only silly *Vanity* of appearing more sagacious at the Politicks than their Neighbours. No sooner was this *Incomparable Declaration* emitted, but some *rigid Churchmen* vext by a Spirit of *Pride* to think that their power of domineering should be in the least abridged; and gaul'd with *Envy* to behold *Dissenters* admitted to any degree of Royal Favour (which they hop'd to engross wholly to themselves) studying likewise by some *Wheadling Artifice* to manage the *Dissenters* so, as that they should expose themselves to his Majesties *just Displeasure*, as a sort of savage Animals, that like *Tygers* can never be rendred tame; Men that would not be quiet under any Government, but like *Trouts* must be always *swimming against the stream*; People without *Conscience*, *Reason* or *common Sense*; whom no Kindness could reclaim, no Clemency oblige (for in such hideous Characters they always represented them;) and withal designing that the *Rods* which
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themselves had both procured, and so mischievously *made use of*, might still be reserved in *Lavender* for a more opportune Juncture, in order to smarter Lashes on all that will not truckle to whatever Ceremonies their Reverencies should think fit to impose. Upon these and such like Motives, I say, a strange sullen Murmur, and *grouling* Humour has ever since possess'd most of the violent Church-men, to repine at or reproach his Majesties Proceedings, to incense or amuse the People with Fears and Jealousies, and especially to cajole the Dissenters not to regard this Indulgence with that Respect they ought to do, or at least to discourage them from contributing their share towards rendring it perpetual.

To reach these Ends, the *Malecontents* aforesaid have had their *Clubs*, and *Cabals*, and *little Associations* acted by *united Councils*, not altogether perhaps uninfluenced by *foreign Correspondencies* (as 'tis said, they had once heretofore on somewhat alike occasion) with some that have found *Liberty of Conscience*, too advantagious a *Plant* to themselves, to suffer it, by their good Wills, to *thrive* any where else.

The high-flown Church-men have endeavoured to affright such honest *Country Gentlemen*, as they thought Bigotted to their Establishment, with Outcries, that this Indulgence will certainly blow up the *Church of England*, and then Good-night to the *Protestant Religion*, and so farewell to all their *Abbey-Lands*.

On the other side the *Latitudinarian* Divines, as being for their reported Moderation of greatest Credit and Interest among the *Non-Cons*, have been inveigled by specious Pretensions, to amuse and bug-bear the *Dissenters* with a noise of the *Snake in the Grass*; that the *Constitution of England* was *unhoop'd*, all the *Laws* of Civil Property shaken, by the King's dispensing with the *Penalties* of these *Irreligious Religious* ones; that this Indulgence was only a *Scaffolding*

folding erected for the building up of *Popery*, which would be *thrown down* as soon as the *intended Structure* was complete, &c.

These Insinuations were managed at first with *Caution*, till having (as they thought) by *private Whispers* sufficiently prepossess'd their own Party, and created *preparative Jealousies* amongst others; To crown the Work, out comes a Paper, called *A Letter to a Dissenter*, &c. wherein all that *Wit* or *Malice* would rake together, to invenom Mens Minds with *false Impressions*, is muster'd up, and boldly published to the World.

No sooner was the *Press* delivered in Hugger-mugger of this *hopeful Brat*, but many *grave Dons* (appointed for that *Cue*) stood ready to admire and recommend its charming *Features*: Industrious were the Papers spread, (and some *Crape Gowns* appeared so fond of promoting it, as if they had a mind to play the *Interlopers* on the *Hawkers*) printed it was more than *once* or *twice*, and at last in a *single Sheet* for *Conveniency* of Postage, that no Corner of the Land might be unattempted by this excellent Specimen of the Church of *England's* Loyalty.

As for the *Author*, since he is so kind to himself, as to play Bo-peep with the *Publick*, under the Mask of a couple of *Letters* only, I am not solicitous to enquire after either the *Quality* or *Habitation* of a *certain uncertain T. W.* whom perhaps I am never like to find; nor did I certainly know the Gentleman, should I descend to *Personal Reflections*, how obnoxious soever he might happen to be to them; that is a *base and sneaking* Practice used only by such as thereby confess themselves *over-match'd* in the Argument.

For this Reason too, I shall not qualify the Paper with any harsh *Epethites*; whether it fall within the Statute of *false News*, or without it; whether it should be called *Libel-*

lous or *Seditious*, or somewhat worse, are Questions that belong not at all to my Province.

That which I apprehended my Duty (both as a disinterested *honest Man*, a good *Subject*, a hearty Lover of the future Peace of my Country, and a sincere Professor of, and *Well-wisher* to the Protestant Religion, that it may be established on such a *Foot* as may for ever preserve it free, both from the *danger* of being persecuted, and the *scandal* of persecuting any others) was to consider the Purport and End of this Writer, and the Reasons he offers; and since these, to the best of my Understanding, appear repugnant to all those Obligations, I hope I may be allowed to offer my Conception thereupon without any just Offence; to antidote the *unwary* against those *mischievous Notions*, which I conceive he would *instil* into their Minds, under the Flourishes of a *gaudy Rhetorick*.

For it must be acknowledged, that this Pamphlet is wrote with a great deal of *Art*, full of pert Sallies of *Wit*, and *gay Language*, plausible Expressions of *Kindness*, and a *Stile* altogether accommodated to amuse and inveigle; but for *strict Truth*, or *solid Arguments*, the Author has been pleased to *dispense* with his Readers Expectations.

To premise thus much, I thought not altogether impertinent, that the *State of the Case* being rightly apprehended, we might have done the sooner, and the Reader, if he please to divest himself for a while of Prejudice and partial Affections, may be the better enabled to judg of what is offered on either side: And so let us come to the matter.

Here's a Letter from *Some body* to a *Dissenter* ——— Very good! What has the *illustrious* unknown *T. W.* to say to his humble *dissenting Servant*? Why truly, after an envious Reflection on the late *Addressees* in general, and a fine-spun-insinuating *Banter*, he has a *pair of Advices* to communicate

to

to him: 1. *That he must suspect his new Friends.* 2. *That he must not hazard the Publick Safety, neither by desire of Ease, nor of Revenge.* To the *first* we can give no *Categorical* Answer till we better understand his meaning, which I shall enquire after by and by: But as for the *last*, I hope there is no *Dissenter* in *England* but was before fully convinced that it was his Duty; and so the Gentleman might have spared the pains of his elaborate Letter in that respect. But he has also some *News* to tell him, *viz.* That the *Papists* always make their first Court-ship to the *Church of England*; That they are not in their Hearts so fond of the *Dissenters*, as to their Principles, but civil to them, in regard their *Interests* at this Juncture happen to unite in *aliquo Tertio*, *viz.* A Repeal of the *Penal Laws*, under which they have *both* smarted, and are in danger to do so again; and that therefore *one Reason* (and perhaps with many, the *only Reason*) why they are content to allow them *Liberty*, is because they would thereby get a little for *themselves* and their *Posterity*. Having made these *wonderful Discoveries*, our Author proceeds to open his Budget full of *Supposals*, mixt with known *Falshoods*, and thence conjures up a Parcel of horrid *Inferences*, and upon the whole concludes, that we *had as good be down-right Atheists*, as consent to part with the *Penal Laws*;—And so he is, *dear Sir, your most affectionate humble Servant.*

This is the *Sum* and *Substance* of the Pamphlet, when stript of its *Top-knots* and Gallantry; and were not vulgar Ears more open to *Rhetorick* than *Logick*, there need no more be said to expose its *Shallownefs* and *Vanity*; but since the *Trifle* is become so celebrated, I shall briefly over-haul the Particulars.

His first Instruction to *Dissenters*. is, that *they have cause to suspect their new Friends*; and have they none to suspect their *old Enemies*? The truth is, the *Dissenters* would gladly

ly be *Friends* with all their Fellow-subjects, that there might be an Union in *Affections*, and all the mutual Offices of *Justice* and *Humanity*, tho' under different Apprehensions about Matters of Religion; nor can they so much as guess at *any Expedient* able to accomplish that glorious End, *viz.* To render both Governours and People easy and safe, by extirpating the otherwile *perpetual Feuds* and *Fears*, each Party much needs entertain against the other (those infernal *Winds* which so often have raised *Storms*, and more than once *ship-wrack'd* Civil States.) And in a word, to give *God and Caesar each his due*; Unless it be by a total Abolishment of those *Penal Laws* (that have hitherto obstructed all these Blessings) and establishing *Liberty of Conscience* on so firm a *Legal Basis*, that it shall not be *in the Power* (how violent soever the Inclination may be) of any *one Party* to invade the Immunities of the rest.

But this will not answer our Authors End; 'tis too plainly evident by this affected Term of *New Friends*, which runs through all his Paper, he principally means the *King*; who indeed has been the *best Friend* the Dissenters ever had on this side Heaven; and yet some People are so *prodigiously ungrateful* as to persuade them not to *thank* Him for't.

But if we must always mistrust *new Friendships*; then we must not credit the very late Pretensions on behalf of the Church of *England*, that she is sorry for her *past Rigours*, or *will be more kind for the future*: With what *Forehead* does this Gentleman urge us to suspect the *solemn repeated Promises* of our *SOVERAIGN* and yet at the same time expect we should take his *bare Word*, who neither gives us his *own Name*, nor produces any *Commission* from that *Church*, for what he undertakes in *Hers*?

But why must we needs *suspect our King*? Is it because amongst the many *Royal Qualities* he is invested with; a *punctual Veracity*, and generous Disdain of all little *tricking* dissem-

dissembling Arts, has been signally remarkable? No it is, because *the Church of Rome cannot by her Principles allow Liberty to Hereticks*; and because *the Men of Taunton and Tiverton are on a sudden grown eminent for Loyalty*; and because *the Quakers give the King Thanks with a boon Grace*:—Worthy Reasons! But let's examine them apart.

As for the first, our Author exaggerates it with his usual Floridness thus, p. 3. " This Alliance between
 " Liberty and Infallibility is bringing together the two
 " most contrary things that are in the World. The Church
 " of *Rome* doth not only dislike the allowing Liberty, but
 " by its Principles it cannot do it. Wine is not more expressly forbidden to the *Mahumetans*, than giving Hereticks
 " Liberty to the *Papists*. They are no more able to make
 " good their Vows to you, than Men married before, and
 " their Wife alive, can confirm their Contract with another. The continuance of their Kindness would be a
 " Habit of Sin, of which they are to repent, and their
 " Absolution is to be had upon no other Terms, than their
 " Promise to destroy you: — Thus He. And because
 'tis a popular Argument frequently made use of, I shall endeavour to give it a full Answer.

1. What the Church of *Rome's Principles* are, or what by them she *can, or cannot do*, I shall not here take upon me to determine; for many of her Principles are very *abstruse*, even this of *Infallibility*, she has not been pleased to determine *where* and in *whom* particularly it resides; and she *can* do great things, as for example (if I am not * misinformed) she offered once to allow of our *Common-Prayer-Book*, and that I hope you'll say was kindly done of her. Nor do I see any such necessary Contrariety between *Infallibility* and *Liberty*; for though a Man should think himself *Infallible*, (if any can in good earnest

* See my Lord Coke's Charge given at Norwich Assizes, 4 Aug. 1606 4th page of the sheet F. (for 'tis not pag'd.)

think so) it does not follow, that he must bear, spoil or kill all that will not *own* such his *assumed Infallibility*; at least *Liberty* and *Infallibility* may agree, as well as we find by woful Experience *Conformity* hath done with *Nonconformity*; and if Dissenters must be persecuted, 'tis much alike to them, whether it be by a *Fellow-Protestant* or a *Papist's* Hand; only the former, Act somewhat the more *absurdly* in Imposing on others, since they confess they may perhaps be in the *wrong themselves*.

2. But however these things may happen to be, 'tis plain the Gentleman does not here argue a *Propos*; for we have nothing to do with the *Church of Rome*, she is no Party to the Transaction: The *Dissenters* have never that I know of, entred into any *Treaty* about Reconciliation with her in Principles, whatever *others* have been nibbling at. Our Concern lies with a Prince, our *natural Sovereign*, who altho he be of that Communion, has solemnly avowed to all the World, *That it has been, and is his constant Sense and Opinion, that Conscience ought not to be constrained, nor People forced in Matters of meer Religion*. In pursuance of which Principle, his Majesty has at present restrained the Execution of the *Penal Laws* and assured the Dissenters that they *shall enjoy the same Ease during his Reign*; and that he would be ready to contribute *His Part* toward rendering the same perpetual, both by repealing those Laws, and confirming the *Right* of free Exercise of Religious Worship, and securing by Law such a settled and permanent Freedom of Conscience from being invaded by any Party whatsoever for the future.

The Question is, whether the Dissenters ought not thankfully to embrace his Majesties most Gracious Offer herein, and not be wanting on their part towards bringing it to effect? To which I should answer affirmatively, and take it to be their *true Interest* and only Preservative. For,

3. How

3. How far soever the Church of *Rome's* Pretensions to *Infallibility*, or her Aversion to those she calls *Hereticks* may extend, we find in fact, that it does not render all her Members so extravagant as to venture on Impossibilities, and act contrary to their own apparent *Interest*; *Quia desunt vires* is allowed by their *hottest* Casuists, a sufficient Ground for *tolerating Hereticks*; else every one of her Sons should be obliged under Pain of Damnation to *run a muck* against all Mankind that differ from her; whereas we see many places, where both *Papists* and *Protestants* live very quietly together, and that there have been and are Princes of the *Roman Creed* that have and do tolerate different Religions, without esteeming themselves ever the worse *Catholicks*; nor does the Pope venture to excommunicate them on that account.

I doubt not but those of the *Protestant Cantons* in *Switzerland* believe as much as any of our Dissenters that there is *Idolatry* in the Church of *Rome*; and there is no Question but those of the *Papish Cantons* believe the other to be *rank Hereticks*, yet they both in a friendly manner *coalesce* into one and the same Republick, and live quietly together for their mutual Preservation; neither the *miscall'd Heretick* thinking himself bound to invade the Civil Rights of the supposed *Idolater*; nor the *imagined Idolater* once dreaming that he can never go to Heaven, without a *Promise* to *destroy his Neighbour*, because he fancies him to be an *Heretick*.

Nor do the *Roman Catholicks* of the *United Provinces* (whose Numbers are not inconsiderable) esteem themselves bound to cut their Compatriots *Throats*, but on the contrary have as vigorously as any drawn their *Swords* (even though against the most *Catholic King*) in defence of their *common Liberties*.

By all these and many other like instances that might be given, it appears that *Roman-Catholicks*, notwithstanding their Principles, can sometimes live very *sociably* with *Protestants*, where their common *Safety* and *Interest* requires it; And that this is their case in *England*, shall presently be shewn.

But in the mean time, this may serve in some measure to answer and take off that vulgar reproach now commonly thrown at *Dissenters*, that *they joyn with Papists to set up Popery, by destroying the Church of England*; Of which Charge neither Branch is true; they joyn not with Papists to *set up*, but rather to keep *down* Popery, and not to *destroy* the Ch. of *England*, but rather to *establisb* it upon firm and lasting Grounds; To give every Party their *Right* in an uninterrupted Freedom of Conscience, and prevent any of them from using Violence to the other. To joyn with People of another Persuasion in a certain respect where our several Interests happen to unite, may be done without the just scandal of favouring their Opinions, so when the Pope expostulated with *Cardinal d' Ossat* Ambassador from King *Henry* the 4th of *France*, that his Master had entred into an Alliance with the *Dutch*, who were *Hereticks*, to the danger of the Church; that most prudent *Minister of State* replied, "That his *Holiness* need not wonder how *in Reason of State* "those of *different Religions* might joyn together for *Political Ends*, without hazard of altering Religion; thus "David sought Protection of the *Philistines*, and *Abraham* "redeemed the *sinful Sodomites*; That he took it to be upon the same Ground, that his *Holiness* himself not long before received a *Persian Ambassador*, who was so far worse "than an *Heretick*, that he never pretended to the Name "of a *Christian*. — With which Reason the Pope was pleased to acquiesce.

Whatever *Principles* bigotted People may have advanc'd, wise Princes have, and always will endeavour to act according

ding to *Reasons of State* and their true *Interest*. The Poets tell us, that the Gods esteemed themselves obliged by no Oath, but when they *swore by Stix*: The judicious Bacon mythologizes it thus, that though some *Princes* scorn to be Slaves to their Words, yet when their *Interest* runs parallel with their *Promises*, you may rely upon their Performance.

To remove our Suspensions in this case, we have not only the greatest *verbal* Assurances that can be given from the most steady and generous of Princes, but also the concurrence of his *Interest*, together with that of all those of his *Communion*. It is *His* Interest, as to begin, so to *continue* Liberty of Conscience; as it allays *Animosities*, secures his own *Peace*, encreases *People*, augments *Trade*, advances his Royal Revenue. And to settle it upon an *impregnable Foot*, seems the greatest Kindness he can do those of his *own* Persuasion; to give them any Encouragement to hope further, will certainly embroil his Affairs, and in the End may probably occasion some great Disaster on that Party; They being at most not much above one in sixty, nay perhaps not one in a hundred, (for I conceive our Author may too much under-calculate, when he makes them but one in two hundred) in number compared with the rest of his Subjects; the Force of which over-Proportion is also much augmented by their inbred Aversion to *Poper*y, than which nothing can be more visible throughout the Nation; whereunto add that the next *Heirs* in prospect are both *Protestants*, and bestowed in *Protestant Alliances*, which must needs unravel all the Web, and perhaps before it may be compleatly woven.

So that if any of the warmer *Religious Orders* should think of pushing on any present Advantages, so far as to make *theirs* the *National* Religion; as they are most unlikely to succeed in such a rash Attempt, so the *Nobility* and *Gentry*

of their Party, and all that have *Eſtates* (who muſt ride out any contingent Storm and ſtand *at mark*, whilſt others may retreat to *ſafe Covert* abroad) cannot be ſo dull as not to foreſee that whether they *fail* or *proſper* at preſent, they muſt certainly expect to pay for it *ſeverely* hereafter, and they cannot tell *how ſoon*, therefore will undoubtedly be cautious of countenancing any ſuch *precipitate Meaſures*; but rather being content with the Liberty of their own *Conſciences* and Enjoyment of their Natural *Priviledges* in common with their Fellow-ſubjects will adjoyn their Endeavours towards transmitting that *Eaſe* and *Happineſs* to their Poſterity, upon ſo comprehensive a Foundation, that it ſhall be the *General Intereſt* of the Nation to perpetuate it.

It may therefore upon the whole matter, be moſt *reaſonably*, as it ought moſt *dutifully* be believ'd, That his Majeſty's *reiterated Promiſes* deſerve our entire Confidence; That a Prince ſo *Wiſe* and *Generous* will not expoſe both his own Eaſe and Grandeur, the *Repoſe* of his Realms, the Honour of his *Name*, nay the Honour of his *Religion*, together with the *future Safety* of all that profeſs it in theſe Realms, to ſuch inevitable hazards; But ſince that he intends (as he has frankly declared) *no more* than to make his Reign *eaſy* to Himſelf, and All his People, To leave thoſe of his own Perſwaſion (as well as others) in a Condition leſs Burdenſom than for ſome Reigns paſt; And by theſe ſweet and gentle Methods at once ſecure the *future Tranquillity* of his Kingdoms, and raiſe a perpetual Monument of his own *Wiſdom* and *Clemency*, whereunto His great *Experience* as well as natural Goodneſs do diſpoſe Him; The paſt Example of a *mighty Monarchy* reduced to a great Declenſion chiefly by the Maxims of an over-zealous *Fierceneſs*; Or that more Modern and Terrible One of *Another* (the Conſequences of which may perhaps be

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foreseen without Consulting *Astrology*) are no very inviting Precedents for a prudent Prince to follow; especially when the Difficulties *here* are so much more insuperable than they were in either of *them*.

But after all this very Question, whether we shall *trust* or *suspect*, is in Truth impertinent, and has no room in our present Case. His Majesty, though he well *deserves*, is yet so gracious as not to *require* our Confidence *gratis*, he offers a *legal Establishment* of our common Religious Freedom; you shall have at the same instant as good Security as can be devised, provided Terms be not insisted on, that are naturally repugnant to *that Liberty* intended to be Confirmed; For if it be not *General*, it cannot be Effectual; But by a General Security equally including *All Parties*, the Fears and Jealousies of *Each* must vanish, and their several Interests *Concentre* to continue Inviolable: For whatever may be the Desires and Inclinations of *Roman Catholics*, 'tis certainly their *Interest* to secure themselves with the Multitude; And if it prove a Security to *Them*, 'tis so to others: If not to *others*, it will likewise *fail* them when they may need it; Therefore they are as much concern'd as any, to make a *sound Provision*. That which defends the Whole, preserves every Part; But a Partial Security is imperfect and dangerous.

As to the Particulars, or *Modalities* of such Security, 'tis the Work of the *Great Council of the Kingdom*: And as it would be a *sawcy Vanity* for a private Person to prescribe, so it can be no less *Presumption* in any to say, That the *Wisdom of the Nation* can find no Expedients instead of the *Tests*, which without being (like them) appropriated to the Interest of a *single Party*, or invading Mens Civil Rights or Priviledges for Matters of Conscience (as they do) may yet no less, nay more effectually prevent all Apprehensions of any one Parties over-running the rest. If

Laws be no *Security*, then the *Controverted Laws* and *Tests* are none: If they be, then why may not *another* Legal Provision, *better*, because more comprehensive, and founded on more equal and reasonable Principles, secure us All as well as *Those*? These Reasonings to my mean Apprehension, seem not inconsiderable; but the whole is with all deference submitted to the consummated Prudence of his Majesty and his *two Houses of Parliament*, when he shall think fit to convene them.

The *Letter-Writer's* next Suggestion why we ought to *distrust*, is, because sudden Changes are not natural, and how miraculous a thing it is, *That the Men of Taunton and Tiverton should now be above all other eminent for Loyalty*.—Good Sir! Either cease, or encrease your Astonishment; there are other strange violent *Metamorphoses* abroad, altogether as surprising; the old Declaimers against *Fears* and *Jealousies* become the busiest Promoters of them; the former Magnifiers of *Prerogative* swagger for *Magna Charta*; they that have an hundred times avowed, that they had rather be *Papists* than *Presbyterians*; they that have spent their *best Breath* for more than twenty years in *Invectives* against *Dissenters*, and promoted the most violent Prosecutions against them, as often as the Government did not restrain them, are now (if your News *pag. 10.* be true) *overflowing with the spirit of Peace, Charity and Condescension*. And all their former *Haughtiness* is for ever extinguished.

This is certainly a *sudden* unexpected Change, and therefore we are inclinable to take your Advice *pag. 3.* and *pause a while before we believe it*; for since we are satisfied our *Features* are not altered, we are apt to conclude, *neither is your Opinion of us, whatever may be pretended*.

We forget not the Affairs of *Taunton* and *Tiverton*, and could say there were *more than Dissenters* concern'd; but suppose them such, were it not the Severities which they had
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already suffered from the *Church of England*, and those more astonishing ones, they were made believe they must *unavoidably encounter* under a *Roman-Catholick Prince* (the *very thing* continued to be insinuated in this *Paper*) that plung'd and hurried them into that *desperate Defection*? And when by his Majesties *Gracious Declaration* they were secur'd from those dismal Apprehensions, could less be expected than that returning to their Duties, they should express themselves *eminent for Loyalty*? Is it any wonder that the *Cause ceasing, the Effect should also cease*? Or can we think that Gospel-saying a *Paradox, That those to whom much has been forgiven, should love much*?

Let us not flatter our selves, or *calumniate* others; Rebellion and Loyalty (as one has well observ'd) subsist not so much in Parties as *Persons*; Good, that is, *true Christian Principles*, are excellent Qualifications to advance the Peace of *Civil Government*: but since the Majority of those that profess them, rarely walk up to those *self-denying Rules*; if we turn over Histories, and survey the Transactions of the World, 'twill appear that the Interest of Societies is *that* which generally secures their Obedience. That Government which protects *most*, and leaves *fewest* uneasy, being likely to be freest from *Discontents*, and consequently from *Disturbance*; for when all is done, the Magistrate that *protects* and *cherishes* any sort of People in his Dominions, may justly require their Service, and safely rely upon their *Obedience*; But if he persecute them, whether *Papists*, Church of England-*Protestants*, or *Dissenters*, though perhaps he may violently force many of them to an *outward Compliance*, yet he can never prudently rest upon their *Affections*.

As for the *Quakers* (on whom our *facetious* Author is pleased to exercise his *merry Vein*) if any have been so censorious as to declare them not to be *Christians*, yet they themselves profess the contrary, and have patiently under-

gone Sufferings *equal* at least with any other Party, to make good their Claim to that Title, however they are *Men*, and on that score, leading peaceable inoffensive Lives, ought to be free from Persecutions, or being compelled by outward *Force* to a Religion that can only be propagated and entertain'd by *Love*; And also, if they deserve it, may be made use of, and *preferred* in Civil Matters as well as others; since we, and I think most other Nations of the Christian Name refuse not to suffer *Jews* to live quietly amongst us, notwithstanding they are *open Denyers* of our ever blessed *Saviour*.

Hitherto we find this Author's Arguments of *no force* to persuade us to abandon our *Interest* and *Duty*, which are both inseparably *wound up* in our lawful endeavours to get the *Penal Laws* repeal'd.---But if he cannot delude us with *Sophistry*, he will affright us with *Mormo's* and *Hobgoblins*; Give him leave but to *suppose for you*, & then if you do not *run out of your Wits*, he pronounces *your Courage too dangerous a virtue to be commended*.

But as he offers no proofs for his *Supposals*, so they are founded neither on *Truth* nor *Probability*. He imagines some *criminal Alliance* between the Roman *Catholicks* and *Dissenters*, when there is nothing more than a joint Concurrence (prompted by their Common Interest, and justified by the first Principles of *Religion*, *Reason*, and *Policy*) to remove unwarrantable and oppressive *Shackles* upon Conscience, and withal at the same time advance such a *Legal Establishment* as may secure, not only themselves, but all others too, in their Rights, both as *Men* and *Christians*.

And what need was there of any *Mediators* armed with Power of giving *Encouragements* and *Rewards* to induce Men to such an innocent undertaking, no less advantageous to all others (nay more to the *Church-men*) than themselves?

As Part of this Alliance or an *Effect* thereof, 'tis plain, he reckons

reckons the Dissenters returning of *Thanks* to his Majesty for his Declaration of *Indulgence*, and then at once to cast an insolent *Reflection* on his Majesty, or his Ministers of State, and to expose the dissenting Ministers as Mercenaries, such as act not upon Principles of Conscience or Honour, but may easily be drawn by a little Money to any lewd Compliance, although to the Ruin of the Protestant Religion, and Subversion of all our Municipal Laws, and the very Constitution of our English Government, (for elsewhere he brands *Addressing* with no less mischievous Tendencies, see pag. 9. & 10.) He proceeds to advance two most *scandalous Charges*.

The first, pag. 5. by way of Suggestion, as if *some* (formerly implied in a like Negotiation) had now by *Authority*, *sprinkled Money among the Dissenting Ministers*.

The other, pag. 7. in a positive Affirmation, *That the first Draughts of the Addresses* (he speaks generally, *that fly abroad every week, and with an Air of Scorn and Malice,---murder us with another to the same*) are made by the Priests [which cannot otherwise be meant than of *Roman Priests*] and that the *Dissenters Part is only to write them out fairer*.—— [His Kindness it seems will allow them to be the *better Scribes*, tho *such Dunces* as not able to express their *own Thoughts* so well as certain *invisible Fathers* who know nothing of them.]

Now if both these, be (as I dare, with all assurance, averr, they are) utterly false, then I hope the World will partly understand the *Temper* of the *Writer*, and *Design* of his Paper, and entertain both with that *Abhorrence*, due to one that regards neither *Respect* to his *Prince*, nor *Justice* towards his Neighbours, nor any Measures either of *Charity* or *Truth* or common *Honesty*; so he may but reach his ends, of dividing the Dissenters amongst themselves, and exposing them all to the *Contempt* and Hatred of others; fomenting Misapprehensions and Jealousies, thereby to frame an *Engine* both for their *Ruin*, and for continuing the *exorbitant Power* of *that Party* for whom he is an Advocate. But

But how do we demonstrate that there is no Truth in the Particulars he hints at? I confess it is impossible *apodictically* to prove such an universal Negative; but if offering as much towards it as the *nature of the thing* will bear, may be sufficient, I doubt not but to satisfy all the impartial World.

1. The manner of our Author's talking, argues a Conscience of *Guilt*, and has all the natural Features of a *Libel*; nothing asserted, but blind Hints, and *Innuendo's* thrown out; Baits fair enough to catch *Gudgeons*, and make them swallow the *Calumny*; but yet so cautiously worded, as to secure a *Retreat* when taxed with down-right *Slander*. His *Hypothesis* he thought, might amuse, but where is his *Assumption* that should prove? *If those Men that formerly sprinkled Money amongst the Dissenting Ministers, should (says he) by the SAME AUTHORITY now do the like, and disburse where they cannot otherwise persuade.*—He ought to have added;—*But those very Men have now done the same,*——which being proved, and not till then, he might have inferred (as he does) *that it seems rather an Evidence than a Presumption of the Deceit*; Whereas now, his Discourse is a Rope of incoherent Sand, and may thus, and much better be retorted,——If this Author have only *dreamed*, or *invidiously forged* this Supposal, as is highly probable, because he produces no Testimony for it, (which in Reason it must be thought he would have done, could he have procured any) then 'tis rather an Evidence than Presumption of Deceit, and something else which I am not willing to express by its proper Name.

2. This Insinuation about sprinkling of Money consists of two parts: 1. That such a thing was once, and by Authority too, done formerly, to the Dissenting Ministers: 2. The like again now by the very same Men.——Here we are left altogether in the dark *when*, or how long ago this *formerly* was; but it seems 'twas within Memory, because by the same Negotiators. Now I do well remember, that Dr. Owen in

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the Preface to a Book, Intituled, *An Enquiry &c.* partly in Answer to the Reverend Dr. *Stillingsfleet's* Discourse of the Unreasonableness of Separation, printed *Anno* 1681, takes notice of a Report then advanced, “ *That the Nonconformists* “ *some of them at least, do receive, or have received Money from* “ *the Papists to act their Affairs, and promote their Interest.* And then he tells the World, “ *That 'tis such a malicious frontless* “ *Lye as Impudence it self would blush at, That those by whom it* “ *was first whispered probably understood better than the Noncon-* “ *formists what Influence Money, or the things which they knew* “ *how to turn into it, had into their Profession and Actings in* “ *Religion;* Whereunto he adds (I had almost said prophetically) these Words, “ ☞ It seems to me that some such Men “ are afraid, lest the present Opposition unto Popery should “ issue in such an Establishment of the Protestant Religion, “ as that hereafter it should not be in the disposal of any, “ nor in their Power to make a Bargain of it, either for their “ Advantage, or in their Necessity.

And a little after, speaking of *Dissenters*, He says, “ How- “ ever they may be Traduced or Accused, they will continue “ in giving the highest Security that Conscience, Profession, “ Principles, Interest and Actions can give of their Stability “ in the same [Protestant] Cause; only they desire to be “ excused, if they make not use of this notable Engine for “ opposing of Popery, namely, the stirring up of Jealousies, “ Fears and Animosities amongst Protestants, which others “ judg serviceable to that End.

And in the next Page, “ Because I know my self herein “ peculiarly reflected on, I do avow, That never any one “ Person in Authority, Dignity, or Power in the Nation, “ Nor any one that had any Relation unto Publick Affairs, “ nor any from them, Papist or Protestant, did once speak one “ Word to me, or advise with me, about any Indulgence or “ Toleration to be granted unto Papists; I challenge all the “ World.

“ World who are otherwise minded, to intermit their Service
 “ for a season unto the great false Accuser, and prove the
 “ contrary if they can ; The Persons are sufficiently known
 “ of whom they may make their Enquiry.

Thus that *Learned Worthy Man*. — And can any Body that knew him, judg that he would either in Piety or Prudence print at such a rate (in a time when *enow* would have been ready to detect it), if what he so *amply* and *earnestly* denies, had in it any Colour of Truth?

Yet since he remarks, it was at that time become a publick Slander, 'tis highly probable *this* was what *our Author* would hint at, in the first Branch of his Supposition, if at least he thereby meant *any thing*, or had so much as any old *baffled Story* whereon to ground the Figment ; For, perhaps, we shall wrong the Gentlemans Invention, not to ascribe it altogether to his *own teeming* Imagination.

3. *Non Entis nulla sunt Affectiones*, If there were no such *pecuniary sprinklings* heretofore, then none *now*, according to the Letter-writers own Account, for he supposes the latter to be done by the *same Instruments*, and in the *same Methods* ; And so all his Tattle about *Ministers who having fallen under such Temptations*, are engaged to continue their Frailty, by the *Awe they are in*, lest it should be exposed, &c. becomes insignificant.

4. If there were any such Artifices of *Bribing Ministers*, or of having *Addresses penn'd by Jesuits*, or other Popish Priests, sent to Dissenters whose part was only to Copy, Sign, and Present them, it is most reasonable to believe, That such Intrigues must be practised upon those that *most early* Addressed, to the end others might be invited to follow. But so far is this from any Resemblance of Truth, That the *first Addressers* in this kind, were so scrupulous as not to impart their Intentions to any but those of their *own Communion*, till the Form was adjusted and agreed upon amongst themselves.

And for the full *Detection* of any such Practices as are insinuated, I have *Commission* from Persons sufficiently able to answer such an Engagement, to *Advertise* and *Assure* all the World,

That if any Person or Persons can make appear either, That there was any Money, or Moneys worth whatsoever, directly or indirectly, Given, Promised, or Propounded to any of the Persons that did first Address, viz. That of the Baptists, That of the Presbyterians, or that of the Congregational Persuasion of London, to dispose them, or any of them, to make such Address; Or that there was any Draught or Copy of any of the said Addresses, or any part thereof (drawn by any Person or Persons, other than some of those that subscribed the same respectively) ever sent, shewn, or proposed to any of the Subscribers, That then the Person or Persons making such Discovery, shall, upon his or their Application to the Bookseller, whose Name and Habitation is hereunto prefix'd, receive Directions where and of whom, he or They, and every of them making such Discovery, may and shall (besides most hearty Thanks) have, and be honestly and Bonâ Fide paid a Reward of Fifty Pounds of Lawful Money of England.

The rest of his Supposals are of the same Leaven both for Truth and Charity. Who are those Dissenters, and on what part of the Globe do they dwell, (For sure they must be *Antipodes* to Ours) that preach up *Anger and Vengeance* against the Church of England? That are under a Contract which obliges them upon a Forfeiture to make use of *Inflaming Eloquence*? That apprehend their Wages would be retrench'd, if they should be moderate? — Quite contrary, they have, with a most Christian Moderation, so far overcome the Resentments of their past hard Usage, or present Provocations, that they treat

that Church with all Friendliness and Respect; But think they mean her no Harm when they with those dangerous Weapons out of her hands, which she has so long indiscreetly made use of, only to ruine other innocent People, and stab her own Reputation.

Does this Sir Politick T. W. or W. T. (for some Criticks think that the truer Reading) imagine Liberty of Conscience, or Freedom to worship our Creator in *such manner* as we are convinc'd to be most agreeable to *his Will*, without being *jailed* or *undone* for the same; and without being scarr'd by severe Temporal Penalties to joyn externally and Hypocritically in a Religious Worship, which our Consciences tell us is sinful; does he, I say, conceit this noble Priviledg, so *cheap and vile a thing* that none will appear for it but such as are either *suborned* with Money, or have deserved to be *hang'd*? Is it not a pretty Notion, and much becoming a *Statesman*, that those who chiefly to assert Liberty of Conscience (though in a very bad and irregular way) incur'd the Want of a *Pardon*, must after such Pardon obtained, needs act against their Consciences, if they offer to perswade any to endeavour the settling such Liberty regularly in a *Legal Course*?

Nor is his next *politick Squint* less impertinent, as if *one Prince* might not for Reasons of State continue Friendship with another, whose Conduct in some Particulars he highly *disapproves*; nor know I how, in that case, he can more effectually declare such dislike, than by steering a direct contrary Course himself.

His Noise of soliciting *Addressees*, the *Tyring Post-Horses* with *Circular Letters*, and *threatning*, where *Persuasions* would not serve to procure them, is all but the Product of a very *bold Imagination*; And he has been sufficiently challenged to give but *one single Instance*. Sure the Gentleman is Master of no great Stock of *Gratitude* at home; that he can think

the whole Nation so wondrous barren of it, on one of the most glorious Occasions that ever were given for that good-natured *Virtue* to display it self.

Rather than fail of advancing *Jealousies*, he seems willing to contradict himself, as well as Truth; and both complains of the Dissenters for their *Forwardness*, and yet would have the World believe they were very backward in *Addressing*.—— But still, wherein I pray, lies the harm of the thing it self, that either there should need such Variety of Artifices to draw in the *unwilling*; Or that can render them *criminal* that did with all ready Zeal make those grateful Acknowledgments? This he undertakes to tell us, *pag.* 8. & 9. (for I follow the *first Edition*) and the Sum of his Discourse amounts to neither more nor less than *this*.

That the King's Declaration for Liberty of Conscience was an **IRREGULAR ACT** [Very dutifully spoken!] therefore the Dissenters ought not to have taken any notice of it, but to have forbore the Publick-Exercise of their Religion, till a Parliament had allowed it. [which if he and his Associates can help it, shall never be.] But since they did not only receive the Benefit granted, but publicly return his Majesty Thanks for it, they thereby give a Blow to all the Laws by which their Religion and Liberty are to be protected, and fall foul upon Magna Charta [Which Chapter of it I beseech you Sir?] gave up their Right in the Laws; for after giving Thanks for the Breach of one Law, they lose the Right of complaining of the Breach of all the rest.

This is sad News! but as good Luck would have it, there is not one Article of it true; for the King's Declaration was in it self, not only a very pious, prudent and gracious, but (according to the antient Constitution of this Realm) a most Legal Act. The Dissenters had been the most *inexcusa-*

bly *peevish* People in the World, if they had not accepted of it, the *most ungrateful* if they had not thankfully acknowledged it, and will be the *most stupid Neglecters* of their own Interest, both *Religious* and *Civil*, if they do not exert all their Endeavours towards having it established for Posterity by a *Law*.

Upon this occasion it may be expected, that I should enter into a long Discourse in Affirmance of his Majesties *Right* to dispense with Coercive Laws in *Matters of Religion* : But since that is already done by a *far better Hand* in a *Just Treatise* (which may possibly ere long see the Light) I shall not *actum agere*, or inlay my Copper with that *Noble Author's Gold* ; but content my self to say in general,

1. That as it was the *Right* of our *English Kings* by the *Common Law*, so it has been confirmed to them by several *Statutes* ; and they have accordingly exerted it time out of mind ; and particularly 'tis reserved to the *Crown* by the Statute of 22 Car. 2. cap. 1. for preventing and suppressing seditious Conventicles, in these Words,——Provided, That neither this Act, nor any thing therein contained, shall extend to invalidate or avoid his Majesties Supremacy in Ecclesiastical Affairs ; But that his Majesty and his Heirs and Successors may from time to time, and at all times hereafter, exercise and enjoy all Powers and Authority in Ecclesiastical Affairs as fully and as amply as Himself, or any of his Predecessors have, or might have done the same ; Any thing in this Act notwithstanding.

2. As to what is alledged touching all other Laws, being by this *Precedent* shaken ; and that such as give Thanks for the Breach of *One Law*, preclude themselves from complaining of the Breach of all the rest ; because on the like Ground the King may Repeal any other *Statutes* without Common Consent in *Parliament*.——It may readily be answered (besides what has been already pointed at in the foregoing Paragraph)

graph) That there is a great difference between *Repealing* a Law, and relaxing or dispensing with the *Penalty*; The first can only be done in Parliament, the latter has been always adjudged to be Part of the *Royal Prerogative*. For example, the Law dooms every Person convicted of *Burghlary* or *picking a Pocket*, to die: Our Kings have frequently in all times remitted the *Execution*: Was this ever thought to be a *Repeal* of those Laws? or any *Infringment* of all the rest?

And if it be so in Civil Cases, wherein the Subject is concerned in the Injury, and where the Matter to be restrained by the Laws, is not only *Malum prohibitum*, but *Malum in se*, not merely *evil*, because forbidden, but *forbidden* because intrinsically *evil*; Then (*a fortiori*) much more strongly it follows, that his Majesty may suspend the Execution of the Penalties, which by *these Laws* relating to Ecclesiastical Affairs, are inflicted on *Actions* or *Defaults* so far from being in themselves *Criminal*, That a very great part of them are undoubtedly allow'd by the Laws of God, *Nature*, and *Reason*.

And so much the rather may his Majesty exert this Right, since these Penal Statutes generally in their *Preambles* (which are *Glaves Legum*, the *Keys* that open to us the *Occasion*, and consequently the main *Scope* and End of Enacting them) affirm that they were made for the Security of the Princes *Person*, and to prevent *Treason*, *Insurrections* and *Sedition*; so that his Majesty is principally and immediately concern'd therein; and since *He* must be allowed the best Judge of his own *Security*, if he shall find that there is *no need* of putting *such Statutes* in Execution to that End; but rather that the *Non-Execution* thereof will more conduce to his Safety, and the publick Repose; and therefore thinks fit to *supersede* or forbear the exacting the Penalties, Where is the Wrong? To whom the Injury?

So that hitherto neither was the King's Declaration an *Irregular Act*, nor the Dissenters thanking him for it any such desperate Business as to make them *forfeit their Right in all other Laws* of their Country ; but most true it is that whilst these *Church-driving Laws* stand in Force, if the Execution of them happen into some *Hands*, we know by Experience that there are a *thousand* very small *Matters*, of which any one, by the dexterous Management of the Gentlemen of *Doctors Commons*, is enough not only to strip any Man of his Interest in the *Laws*, but send his Body to the *Gaol*, and (in their apprehension) his *Soul to the Devil* to boot.

And who can but *Blush* to hear some People upbraid the *Romanists* with that Tenet, *That Faith is not to be kept with Hereticks* (which yet they, with the highest Asseverations, disclaim) whilst at the same time, *Themselves* would have so many *Laws* kept on Foot, that give opportunity to every Villain to cheat any honest Man, by taking Advantage of his *Conscientious Dissent* in Matters of Religion, from the *Establish'd Mode* ; Witness the pleading of *Excommunication* in Bar of a just Action ; And the Disablement of so many to maintain any Suit at Law, or in Equity, unless they first both receive the *Sacrament* according to the Usage of the *Church of England*, and take the *Tests*.

But—*Parcius ista viris*— The Gentleman owns, That the *Church of England* preserving too long the bitter Taste of that Usage They had received in the times of our former Confusions, sacrific'd their Interest to their *Revenge*. [A great Truth, I had almost said, the only one in his Paper.] But now (quoth he) they are sensible of their Mistake, all their former Haughtiness is for ever extinguish'd ; Therefore you may securely trust them, That in the next Parliament [If you Dissenters will be Quiet and suffer them to carry Elections as they please] They will do you Reason ; Ay, and you shall have Liberty, and the Papists never a Bit.

Is there any Body that deserves not to wear a *Muckender*, but must needs see through all this? What better Hopes can Dissenters conceive of *another Parliament* of Bigotted Church-Men than of the *Last*? who were generally *stanch* that way. To go about to wheadle us with Promises of Liberty to *Protestants*, but exclusive of *Romanists*, is, at this time of day, such a *palpable Banter* as only shews the contemptible Opinion they have of the Dissenters *Intellectuals*. Can it be imagined, That *the King* can ever pass it? Would it not be extravagant *Rudeness* to offer it? Nay, have not They themselves already by their Proxies made *Overtures* to the direct contrary?

To pretend now, That They were only the Instruments, not the *Authors* of the late Violences towards *Dissenters*, as it exposes their Prudence and Honesty in the *Fact*, so it manifests their *Insincerity* in the Excuse; did they not *by Concert* throughout the Nation both in *Pulpits*, *Prints*, and *Practices*, instigate and warrantize those Outrages? Have we not seen them in Person animating *Informers*, and with their *own hands* in some places pulling down *Meeting-Houses*.

Nay so high had the inveterate Venom swell'd, that even distressed *Foreign Protestants* felt part of its Fury; For by some of their good Wills none of the poor *Ruinated Hugonots*, should have had any share of that *Noble Charity* which *Royal Mercy* had allow'd to be Collected, and true English Bounty plentifully Contributed for their Relief; But they must notwithstanding *starve*, unless they would first conform to certain *Rituals*, which either they did not *understand*, or else could not be supposed (according to their Education) able in Conscience to *comply with*; and so in flying *one Rape* upon their *Souls*, were dangerously exposed to *another*.

Yet notwithstanding all these too common and unwarrantable *Transports*, it must be acknowledged, there were divers of the *Establish'd Clergy* who kept themselves free from that
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Epidemical Infection of the *persecuting Spirit*, who did Christianly interpose, and venture far in their Endeavours to stem the impetuous Torrent: The Author of the several *Conformists Pleas for the Nonconformists*; The Reverend Protestant *Reconciler*; honest Mr. B—lds, and probably more than I have met with, did publickly appear in *Print*; And others in their *Sermons* and *Practices* declared their more healing and pacifick Principles. May their Names be never mentioned without Respect and Honour! May they never stand *in need* of that Compassion which they so bravely vouchsafed to others under Persecution! May their *Memories* be had in perpetual Renown; and especially let their *Moderation* for ever be imitated!

But as to the Generality of those that pride themselves with the Title of *Churchmen*, it cannot be denied, That as they reproach'd such their *moderate Brethren* with the odious Nick-Name of *Trimmers*, so themselves went on *Jehu's Pace*, nothing but a strict and severe Execution of all the most rigorous Laws would content them; They daily both irritated *Magistrates* and the *Skum* of the People to the *Holy Work*; At *Guild-Hall-Chappel* we have heard such enflaming Rhetorick as this (speaking of the Dissenters) "Let them not call it "*Persecution*, 'tis a just and necessary *Prosecution*, and the most "*they can suffer, is the least they deserve*. In pursuance of such *Pulpit-Maxims*, Laws, tho *too harsh* in themselves, were wyre-drawn abundantly further than the apparent Intent of the Makers. Common Justice denied to any that appeared under the Character of Dissenters; palpable Perjuries wink'd at; *Riots* made not only of the most peaceable Assemblies to worship God, but of the *Friendly Visits* of Relations; Nay where the *small Number* found, were not sufficient to colour a *Legal Prosecution* on that pretence, a *Servant* attending one that came to surprize them, has been *clapt in for a Party* in the Indictment, and an *Outragious Fine* thereupon enforced to be paid

paid ; As in the Case of a *worthy Citizen* near *London-Bridge* ; How *Juries* *Brow-beaten*, and forc'd to present Men on the 23 *Eliz.* contrary to their Consciences ; Some troubled on a *double* Conviction before two several Magistrates for one and the same Offence ; The *Fines* frequently Extravagant, as one Man at a Sessions in *Surrey* was compell'd to pay down 100 pound, for being at one Meeting. In brief, *no Wood* came amiss to make *Arrows* of, for the Destruction of the *Dissenters* ; *Delenda erat Carthago*, all *Nonconformists* were to be ruined in all places, after the Example of *Bristol*, &c.

At this pass matters stood when His Majesty vouchsaf'd to hold forth his *Golden Scepter*, and put a Stop to all these *Outrages* and *Calamities* : And what Security does this unknown Author give us, that it may not be so again one day, if these Penal Laws be not utterly removed ? How does it appear that the Sentiments of the Church of *England* towards Dissenters are chang'd, unless it be to a greater degree of Malice ? Or that their Haughtiness is for ever extinct, but rather encreased ? For Example, but ten miles up the *Thames*, a good while since the Declaration, a Parson refus'd to Bury a Child, because Baptized by a *Nonconformist*-Minister, so that all the Company assembled for the Funeral were forc'd to depart, and the Infant's Corps to be kept above Ground all Night ; And hardly would he be induced by any Entreaties to permit its Interment the next day, and then too without vouchsafing his *Reverencies* Presence.

I would not file particular Mens Failures to the Reproach of a Community amongst whom are so many *Learned worthy* Men ; But this I cannot forbear to say, That if the Church of *England* would be credited, she ought publicly declare against the Persecuting Spirit, and make her *Repentance* as notorious as the *Scandal* : Whereas her contesting so stiffly for the Continuance of the *Penal Laws*, argues too broadly that she still retains the *very same* Inclinations.

And indeed this mighty *Stir and Outcry* of keeping up the *Tests*, or else we are all undone, is no more than that of old, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!* For by these *Laws and Tests* the *Church-men* (though but one Part, and that not the greatest, of the Nation) have not only engrossed and secured to themselves all the *Preferments and Offices*, all *Places of Profit, Honour, and Trust* throughout the Kingdom; but also an opportunity of Ruinating all, or any of the other *Parties* at pleasure. These are too sweet *Morsels* to be disgorg'd without some *Reluctancy*; And they may be excus'd in *Policy*, if they use all *Efforts* to continue their Enjoyment, or *Hopes* at least, of such *absolute Advantages*; But in the meantime the *Dissenters* will be unpardonably remiss, if they hearken to the Voice of these *Charmers*, and neglect such an opportunity of *Enfranchizing* Themselves and Posterity.

Nor can I imagine what our Author means by that *Hectoring Rhodomantado*, pag. 12. How his Church can in a moment bring Clouds again, and turn the Royal Thunder upon the *Dissenters* heads, Blow them off the Stage in a Breath, if She would give but a Smile, or a kind word: That the least Glimpse of her Compliance would throw them back into a state of Suffering, and draw upon them all the Arrears of Severity which have accrued during this time of Kindness to them:— But She will not allow her self to be rescued [From what ?] by such unjustifiable means, but chuseth to bear the Weight of Power, rather than lie under the Burthen of being Criminal. And to the same purpose he talks elsewhere, That his Church had the first Court-ships, which she rejected, and is ready to suffer, rather than receive all Advantages that can be gain'd by a Criminal Compliance.—— Now besides the most insolent Asperision hereby thrown on his Majesty (as if he were rather her Servant than her Sovereign) that she can so easily induce him to violate his solemn Promises for her Pleasure; I would gladly learn what this expected and so much courted Smile might be, that can perform

perform such *Miracles* ? What it was *His Church* refused, rather than *criminally* comply with ?

Was it that her *Sons* should all turn *Papists* ? This indeed would notably vary the Scene of Affairs, and by casting the *Over-balance* to that Party, alter the *Politick Interest* ; and yet even in such case the *Dissenters* would trust *God's Providence* and the *King's Word* for their Security.

Is it that they should *consent to repeal all the Penal Laws against Roman Catholicks*, with a Reserve of those against *Protestant Dissenters* ? I am much more confident there never was any such *shameful partial* Dealing proposed unto them, than I am, that it was never *voluntarily* offered by them.

But if it should be true, that they have made *frank Overtures to rescind* the Laws against the *Romanists*, and secure them in the *next Reign*, Provided themselves might be continued in their prosecuting *Protestant Dissenters* in this ; and that the same was rejected with a generous Indignation worthy of such a *Proposition* : Then it will not be difficult to guess both at the Nature and Prevalency of their boasted *Smiles*, and what Kindness *Dissenters* are to expect at their Hands, notwithstanding all their fair Pretensions.

Either the Church of *England* opposeth *Liberty of Conscience* in general, and then justly engageth the Body of the Nation against her ; or only *That of Roman Catholicks*, and then they recede from their own Principles, for it cannot be forgot that they heretofore told the *Dissenters*, there was as much Reason the *Roman Catholicks* should be tolerated as *They* : And to confirm it, many of her Communion frequently declared, That *they would rather be Romans than Presbyterians*.

But it may still be urg'd, that the Church of *England* is now no more for *persecuting*, and would be content to give up all the *Penal Laws* on either side ; But cannot, *dares not*, part with the *TESTS* ; especially the last, whereby only

Roman Catholicks are kept out of *Parliament*. For if She quit *this Guard*; presently the *Two Houses* may be full of *Roman Catholicks*, who will establish their Religion by *Law*, or perhaps pretend it actually in Possession *Jure Postliminii*, And so the *Protestant Religion* shall be utterly suppress'd, and the Writ, *De Heretico comburendo* revived, &c.

This is the *Topping Objection*, but I think a very satisfactory *Answer* may be given to it. For,

1. Not to repeat what has already been offered of the *King's Promises*, the *Paucity* of the *Romanists*, and how their *Interest* stands in prospect of *Futurity*, I cannot but remind you, that no body that I have met with, supposes the removal of the *Tests*, without some *equipollent Provision* in the very same *Act*, that may obviate these Fears. And 'tis inconceivable that the *Wisdom* of the Nation so refined, should yet be so barren, as not to be able to contrive some *Civil Security* as strong and safe, without *Hampering* of *Conscience*. For Why may there not be a *Civil Test* form'd, altogether as effectual, and yet not so obnoxious to *Exceptions*, as these *Religious Ones*?

2. If we can secure due *Elections* and *Regular Returns*, we are safe; for undoubtedly the *Free-holders*, *Citizens* and *Burghers* of *England* are not very fond of chusing *Roman Catholicks* for their *Representatives*.

3. As to any *Apprehensions*, that by taking away these *Laws*, the *Roman* should pretend a *Right* to be the *National*, establish'd *Religion*, by virtue of any *Antiquated Statutes*, that may easily be dash'd by an *Establishment* or *Confirmation* of the *present Church of England*, as to all its *Priviledges*, but such as are *Compulsory* by *Temporal Penalties*, altogether *unadequate* means to secure *Religion*, and unnecessary to the *Well-being* of a *Gospel Church*.

4. What if in the same *Bill* that vacates all the *Old Penal Laws*, it be by the *King in Parliament*, asserted and declared, that

that *Liberty of Conscience* is part of the *Constitution* of this Kingdom ; The natural Birth-right of every *English Man* ? And that all Persons endeavouring to undermine or subvert such *Settlement*, shall be adjudg'd *Criminal*, and liable to such *Penalties* as shall be thought fit ; all *Acts* tending thereunto, in themselves *ab initio* and for ever *void*. And every Member of either *House* of Parliament, obliged before he *sits* or *acts*, solemnly to make some such *Declaration*.

5. Or what if all the *Penal Laws*, together with the *Test*, debarring from *Offices* and *Employments*, be abrogated, and only *that* relating to Members of Parliament be kept on foot?

Will none of these *Expedients*, or such *better* ones as may be contriv'd, allay your Fears ?

That which alone must conclude any honest Man's *Judgment*, is the Resolution of this *single Question*.

Whether Persecution in it self be *lawful* ? That is, whether for meer Opinions, or Exercise of Religious Worship, tho different from the national Form, yet no ways disturbing the Publick *Peace*, injuring *Civil Society*, or violating *Morality*, any Persons whatsoever ought according to the *Law of God* or *Nature*, be punish'd by *Death*, *Banishment*, *Mulcts*, *Fines*, or *Imprisonments*, or be rendred liable unto any *Forfeitures* of, or *Preclusions* from those Advantages and Priviledges, which otherwise they might justly pretend to, or ought to enjoy ?

They, and *They only*, that will undertake to justify the *Affirmative*, may reasonably appear for the Continuance of the *Penal Laws* and *Tests*. But then, if they assert any kind of Persecution to be lawful, they ought also to tell us the *Bounds* and *Limits* of it, why the Penalties may not be *sanguinary* as well as *pecuniary*, *positive* as well as *privative* ? why we may not *burn* a Man for his supposed Error in *Religion*, as well as take away his *Goods*, or his *Birth-right* ? On

On the other side, all *Those*, who cannot but acknowledg such *Statutes*, and all Prosecutions thereupon to be *unwarrantable*, as being against the main Tendency of the *Gospel*, contrary to our Lord's Rule of *doing as we would be done by*, and opposite to the Maxims of *Reason* and *Civil Policy*, are bound in *Conscience* as well as *Interest* to declare and use their utmost Endeavours for the *Abolition* of all these burthenfom destructive Laws.

Nor will they be affrighted with any imagined bad *Consequences*, or a Noise of what Advantages *ill Men* may design to make by such a *Repeal*; for as we are not to do *Evil*, that Good may come on't, so we must not omit *doing Right*, whatever may be the *Sequel*. Let us perform *our Duty*, and then we may rest assured, that Divine *Providence* which superintends all the Affairs of this fading World, will dissipate the Councils of any *Architophels*, and either preserve us *from*, or support us *under* the worst they can *contrive*.

But if the *Dissenters* wilfully lose this Opportunity which God and the King have graciously vouchsafed; And shall in Distrust of *Providence*, as well as his Majesties *Word*, multiply to themselves groundless *Fears*; and for certain supposed *Politick Ends*, quit both their *Duty* and *Interest*, to rely on *Egyptian Reeds*, and future *improbable Expectancies*, the Courtesy of a sort of People, whose tenderest *Mercies* they have found to be cruel; and will assist to continue those very Statutes which their *own Consciences* cannot but tell them, are *Irreligious* and *unjust*, and under the Lash of which they have so lately and so *severely smarted*; and by reason of this *resolute Error* against their own *Convictions* and *Experience*, shall happen hereafter to fall under a more *dreadful Persecution*, than ever heretofore; ('tis no matter by *whose Hand*;) Must they not with Confusion of Face, acknowledg they have justly *deserved it*? And that themselves have chiefly contributed to their own Miseries, and entail'd a *Plague* on all their Posterity?

He who is convinced, that Persecution for Religion is *unlawful*, and yet refuses to contribute all he can towards removing those Laws (which either *positively* or *privatively*, for they both depend on the same Bottom) injoin such Persecution; let him pretend what Fears and *Jealousies* he will of ensuing Dangers from the doing of it, I know not how to excuse him from the just Imputation of being either a *Fool* or an *Atheist*.

'Tis true, our Orator asserts, That 'tis as justifiable to have **NO RELIGION**, as wilfully to throw away the humane Means of preserving it. But because I always thought Religion was best to be preserved by *Religious Methods*, and that a Church built upon the Rock, needs not the feeble Supports of *Civil Force*; I would gladly learn what *Humane Means* are necessary or Expedient, or indeed *adequate* to preserve true Religion? Sure I am the *Christian Religion* held up its Head, not only *without*, but *against* such Means for the first Centuries; And yet *then* it was that it most *flourish'd in purity*, and spread it self throughout the World; but as soon as Politicians would be adding their *Humane Means* to preserve it, and interwove it with *Interest of State*, from thence we commonly date its *Declension*.

In a word, if it be the Interest both of the *Papists* of this Nation, and of all *Protestant Dissenters*, to have a General *Liberty of Conscience* firmly settled: If this be no real Disadvantage to the *Church of England*, but only keeps her from *engrossing* all Offices and Employments, which caused her to be *envied*; and from ruining her innocent Neighbours, which made her *hated*; and is both her *Guilt* and her *Shame*: If by the Gospel, no Man is to be abridged of any of his *Civil-Rights* for his different Opinion in Religion; Since we may have as good *Security* for the Enjoyment of this *Liberty for ever* as we our selves can reasonably contrive; since we have felt and found so many *Evils* attending *Persecution*, and never
any

any Good, me Unaccountable why we should not all readily and unanimously agree to the Total Extirpation of all *Tests and Penal Laws* for Religion, and heartily endeavour the *Establishment* of that *Universal Liberty*, which only can render the Nation lastingly *Quiet and Happy*.

I am not unacquainted with the *ill-natur'd World*, as not to foresee, that for this free Publication of my Thoughts, I must expect to encountre a thousand *Scandals and Calumnies*; But —

—— *Hic Murus ahenus esto,*
Nil conscire sibi.

Being conscious of nothing but an *unbias'd honest Intention*, I can smile at, and pity the *impotent Malice* of false Reports. Having taken up that resolution of *Quinctius Cincinnatus*——*Vellem equidem vobis placere, Quirites! Sed multo malo vos salvos esse, qualicunque erga me animo sitis futuri.*

T H E E N D.







